

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY:

The Buck Institute of Education



The Buck Institute of Education (BIE) is a non-profit educational organization whose mission is to help teachers prepare students for successful lives. They do this by training teachers on project based learning (PBL) at workshops all over the country. These trainings are critical to spreading their message and equipping teachers with the skills they need to impact the lives of their students. BIE's annual conference, PBL World, is growing every year with over 1,300 education professionals in attendance in 2017 alone.

Products Used:

[Cvent Supplier Network](#)

[CrowdCompass](#)

[Registration](#)

[Onsite Solutions](#)

35+

hours saved
per event

12+

events per year

The Issues

When Catherine Meharchand, Events Manager, started at BIE, venue sourcing was still a completely manual process which took her up to 40 hours per event. Being new to the events industry, Catherine made the best of the resources she had, but with 4 large events falling solely on her plate and with just a few months' lead-time to source them, Catherine knew there had to be a better way. That's when she started exploring options to become a more efficient planner for BIE which quickly brought her to Cvent.

SEARCHING & USING INDUSTRY CONTACTS

Catherine described the process before using the Cvent Supplier Network as, "Difficult because I had to reinvent the wheel each time." For each event, her leadership team would give her a list of cities from which led her to having to start from scratch researching the city and potential venues that would work best for the event at hand.

BIE already had an existing relationship with a Marriott sales representative, so she would reach out to her Global Sales Office contact and then turn to the internet to search for other properties that might fit her needs. This led to the common, painful process of researching each individual property's website and making cold calls attempting to reach the hotel's sales team. Catherine repeated this for each event, starting from scratch over and over again.

COMPILING AND COMPARING RATES

Hours were spent on the phone, emailing back and forth with venues, and then patiently waiting for responses. “Every time I had a question about a proposal I would have to wait for the sales representative to get back to me. It just didn’t seem efficient and wasted valuable time.” Not only was her lead time short but Catherine is also responsible for planning multiple events at once, including her largest event, PBL World. “I plan everything on my own, so I don’t have time to sit on the phone with a hotel sales rep and wait for those responses,” she says.

Compiling rates was another piece of the puzzle that was tedious and manual. Every proposal she received was in a different format with no standardized way to view data. “I had a document I would send to hotels and then they would ask me to fill out their own form, which was very time consuming. Everything always came back in a different format, and I would have to manually input data into an Excel spreadsheet I created.”

Once Catherine received the proposals, she would print them out and review them, one by one highlighting relevant information. “Then I would manually input all the information into a spreadsheet, so I could compare them apples to apples,” Catherine explains. She repeated this process 12+ times per event.

Luckily, she has always had a great relationship with her Marriott contact who helps facilitate bids with Marriott properties. However, the bids would still be in different formats, which made comparisons difficult. Compiling these spreadsheets manually and comparing all the information could take up to hours, once she already had all the information she needed from the venues.

Getting Buy-in

After about a year with BIE, Catherine started looking for ways to simplify/standardize her sourcing process so she could take on more responsibility. At first her leadership team was skeptical. BIE only hosts a handful of events a year and budgets are tight, so they needed to see the ROI of implementing this type of technology for their events.

FROM INDUSTRY CONTACTS

When evaluating Cvent as a partner, Catherine wanted to ensure that using technology would not lead to her losing touch with her existing hotel contacts. She spoke with her Marriott rep, who told her that she could copy her contacts on all RFPs she sends through Cvent.

“She really likes the fact that I use Cvent because when I send out an RFP through the system, it reduces the number of times we have to go back and forth. It gives her more insight into the types of properties I’m looking for and makes communication much easier,” Catherine says.

FROM STAKEHOLDERS

Catherine brought Cvent’s sourcing platform to her leadership team and showcased the account’s functionality, explaining each step in her current process and compared it to how it would improve with Cvent. Catherine was able to illustrate the significant advantages of replacing manual processes with Cvent’s technology, including cutting sourcing time from one whole week to hours, and her leadership team was sold.

“*I plan everything on my own, so I don’t have time to sit on the phone with a hotel sales rep and wait for those responses.*”

– Catherine
Mercharchand
Events Manager, BIE

Now with Cvent

Catherine has not only increased efficiency and impacted BIE's bottom line, but she now enjoys her job even more. "Before Cvent I would get anxiety, it was like jumping into an ocean without a life jacket. I had no idea where to start." Catherine explains. "Now with the Supplier Network, I get excited and feel much more confident that I'll be able to find an answer for the team." She now uses Cvent's database of 245,000+ venues to search for new properties, strengthen relationships with new and existing suppliers, and create a repository to store all venue spend data.

Cvent has given Catherine the power to negotiate on her timeline now, instead of being at the mercy of others. "I begin negotiating the minute I start receiving RFPs, instead of waiting until all the RFPs are in. It shortens the process and puts me in a better bargaining position in real time," Catherine says. Cvent creates a consistent process and allows Catherine to funnel all bids through one channel.

Since BIE is a non-profit organization, it is critical for Catherine to do her due diligence and negotiate the best rates possible. Her team has a strict auditing process after events, to ensure they are staying within budget and leveraging all resources to get the best rates.

"When I start the auditing process, I can quickly pull reports from Cvent and show everything I did to ensure we received the best rates. I drop all my data into a cost analysis sheet to share with my stakeholders," Catherine explains.

I felt like I had to get the best deal in this tiny window of time and sign a contract ASAP. Now when I go to hotels, I can put a little more pressure on them. Having all that information puts more power in my hands."

OVERALL IMPACT

Cvent has helped BIE reduce time and get more powerful insights into venue spend. Catherine has been able to take the process from 40 hours down to 5 today with Cvent. "I'm going to make myself look good and my department look good because we're going to be able to do it faster than anyone else can. That makes me feel really good about my job. One more task I can check off my list and feel good about."

While BIE continues to expand their events and grow attendance, Catherine looks for more ways to leverage technology to streamline their event management program. Her team relies on her to pull off flawless events for their attendees to spread their message and empower more education professionals to teach using the PBL method.

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”

– Catherine
Mercharchand
Events Manager, BIE

Become the Next Cvent Success Story.

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